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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**U.S. DEPARTMENTS OF JUSTICE AND HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES, ALONG WITH ARCHDIOCESE OF
PHILADELPHIA, SPONSOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING FORUM
IN PHILADELPHIA**

PHILADELPHIA – It has been called a form of modern-day slavery. The victims are poor, often unemployed, and in search of nothing more than a job and decent place to live. What they find are empty promises and inhumane conditions.

Human trafficking involves victims who are typically forced, defrauded, or coerced into sexual or labor exploitation. It is estimated that 50,000 women and children are trafficked into the United States annually.

“Human trafficking is a brutal, global industry,” said Patrick Meehan, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, whose office along with the Department of Justice helped sponsor today’s program. “Victims are lured into these trafficking networks by promises of great pay as, for example, domestic or factory workers. When they get here, many find that not only are the pay and conditions terrible, the unwritten job description might include prostitution, torture, beatings, starvation, and death threats.”

The Department of Health and Human Services has selected Philadelphia, along with Atlanta and Phoenix, to launch a community outreach campaign to “Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking.” In support of this effort and in conjunction with National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, the U.S. Attorney’s Office, Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, and Archdiocese of Philadelphia arranged a one-day seminar – “Identifying and Responding to the Problem of Human Trafficking” – to train and strengthen relationships among the various federal, state, local law enforcement and social service agencies.

The “Rescue & Restore” effort aims to educate Americans about the problem of human trafficking and how they can help victims in their communities. A major component of the campaign is a toll-free Trafficking Information and Referral Hotline, **1.888.3737.888**, to provide assistance to organizations and victims of trafficking.

"The goal of the 'Rescue and Restore' campaign is to increase the number of trafficking victims identified and to help victims receive the benefits and services needed to live safely in the U.S.," said Steve Wagner, Director, HHS Trafficking in Persons Program. "The first phase of the campaign focuses on outreach to those individuals who most likely encounter victims on a daily basis, and we have already been in contact with approximately 60 organizations in Philadelphia representing Federal government, faith-based, ethnic, and social service community who are interested in helping victims restore their lives."

The Catholic Church in the United States, through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic social service agencies, has pledged to work to end human trafficking and serve the needs of its victims. Catholic Social Services of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia has been designated the lead agency for services to victims of human trafficking who may be uncovered in the Philadelphia area.

Cardinal Justin Rigali, Archbishop of Philadelphia, said, "Pope John Paul II has called human trafficking a shocking offense against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights. These victims are often the poorest and most defenseless members of the human family."

Under federal law human trafficking is defined as: 1) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion or in which the person induced to perform such an act is under 18; or 2) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion, for the purpose of subjecting that person to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution outlaws slavery and involuntary servitude (holding another in service through force or threats of force). The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 supplements existing laws that apply to human trafficking including those passed to enforce the Thirteenth Amendment.

MEDIA NOTE: For more information or to arrange interviews contact: Pam Carter, HHS, Administration for Children and Families, (202) 401-9215, Catherine L. Rossi, Director of Communications, Archdiocese of Philadelphia, (215) 587-3747, or Richard Manieri, Public Information Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Pennsylvania, (215) 861-8525.